

★ Dealing with the ever changing policy landscape: Learning from international practice

Professor Tristram Hooley has a message for CDANZ and all workers in career development to keep on building an effective career guidance system in New Zealand.



In his seminal history of careers services in Britain, David Peck (2004) argues that one of the key things that has defined the services in my country has been the inconsistency of policy and politicians. Every time we have had a new government (and sometimes when we haven't), politicians have looked at careers services and tinkered, meddled and reinvented. Sometimes this has improved and professionalised services, but more usually it hasn't. However, the process of constant reorganisation has undoubtedly caused many who work in the field to throw up their hands in desperation. 'Why do they have to keep changing everything?' they ask.

This resistance to change is ironic as one of the key messages of career guidance is that 'change is inevitable' and that we have to encourage clients to be resilient and adaptable. We support clients to develop their skills, to embrace change and to 'always look on the bright side of life'. This is good advice; there is no escaping from change and whether you like it or not you always have to respond to what has happened and not to what you would have liked to have happened.

A willingness to work with change shouldn't mean that we conclude that all change is good. Nor should we assume that there is nothing that we can do about change. As Harold Wilson said 'a week's a long time in politics' and so this week's political reality can quickly become next week's U-turn!

In my research I have looked at career guidance policy in countries from Norway to Saudi Arabia, from Australia to Scotland and in each context policy is dynamic and ever changing. Some countries are better than others at building stable systems and developing things slowly, but all are prone to assuming that the latest idea is better than the last one.

The organisation of careers services in New Zealand is about to change again. Some people around the world will be surprised, as there was certainly a period when your country was seen as having one of the strongest models of career guidance in the world (Watts, 2010). However, nothing can stay the same and the decision to move Careers New Zealand into the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) undoubtedly offers opportunities as well as potential dangers.

In the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network we have developed 10 indicators of evidence-based lifelong guidance policy (Hooley, 2014). I thought that it might be useful to present them here to provide you with an international framework against which you could judge current developments in New Zealand. Of course, you should be careful about generalising international policies into your local context, there may be good reasons why you want to do things differently, but it is hopefully still useful to know how we are thinking about these things in Europe.

The evidence suggests that effective career guidance systems have the following 10 features.

1. **A lifelong and progressive system.** As career is built across the life-course, guidance services need to support this process rather than simply focusing on a single life-stage.
2. **Career guidance should connect to the wider experience and life of individuals.** For example, career guidance in schools should connect to the curriculum. It should also be aware of a host of other contextual factors (community, family, hobbies and interests).
3. **Career guidance should recognise the diversity of individuals.** We need to recognise that individuals bring a range of resources, interests, barriers and concerns to guidance processes.
4. **Career guidance should involve employers and working people, and provide experiences of workplaces.** Understanding the world of work is central to the purpose of lifelong guidance. The involvement of employers and working people helps to inform programmes and inspire clients. Work experience and work-related learning are also critical.
5. **Career guidance is not one intervention, but many, and works best when a range of interventions are combined.** A diverse range of strategies can be used to support individuals to develop their careers e.g. face-to-face, online, groupwork, experiential learning. There are also benefits where these interventions are combined and sequenced programmatically.
6. **Career guidance programmes should help individuals to acquire career management skills.** Individuals who take part in guidance should enhance their capability to manage their own careers.
7. **Career guidance needs to be holistic and well-integrated into other support services.** A wide range of life issues have the potential to impact on individuals' capacity to build effective careers. Services need to be able, where appropriate, to refer clients to services where their other needs can be met.
8. **Careers professionals matter!** The success of guidance processes is strongly influenced by the initial training, continuing professional development, competencies and personal capacities of the professionals that deliver it.
9. **Career information needs to be available and of good quality.** Individuals need a reliable information base to make decisions about participation in learning and the labour market.
10. **Career guidance should be quality-assured and evaluated.** Effective services can learn from customer feedback, the observation of outcomes and the wider evidence base.

Taken together these 10 evidence-based principles may provide some ideas about what best-practice in our field might look like. I wish you luck as you continue to develop your services in New Zealand.

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